

# **Best Practices in Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention**

*Tuesday, June 8, 2010*

Handout Materials



**New York State  
Office of  
Children & Family  
Services**

New York State  
Office of Children and Family Services  
and  
PDP Distance Learning Project

# **BEST PRACTICES IN FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

**June 8, 2010  
Teleconference**

## **Table of Contents**

Recruitment Plan Letter of May 24, 2010	Pg. 1
Recruitment and Retention Plan Template of May 24, 2010	2
Process for Developing Local Recruitment & Retention Plans	5
Questions I Have form	11



May 24, 2010

New York State  
Office of  
Children & Family  
Services

www.ocfs.state.ny.us

David A. Paterson  
Governor

Gladys Carrión, Esq.  
Commissioner

Dear Commissioner and Executive Director:

As part of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), New York State was rated as not being in substantial conformity related to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention Systemic Factor. Therefore, as part of the Child and Family Services Review, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is required to address this in our Program Improvement Plan.

As part of our PIP, we are requesting all local districts and authorized voluntary agencies having a purchase of services contract with a local district for the operation of an adoption or foster boarding home program, to update their Recruitment and Retention Plans focusing on compliance with the federal Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA). The key components of MEPA are:

- The placement of a child in an adoptive home, or in foster care, should never be delayed and never be denied on account of the child's race or ethnicity, or the race or ethnicity of the adoptive or foster parents.
- MEPA also requires the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in State for whom homes are needed.

Attached is a template that outlines the areas to be included in your plan. You are not required to use the template, but rather it is intended to highlight the data and components that should be included in your plan. Of course, if it is easier for you to use the template, feel free to do so.

Capital View Office Park  
52 Washington Street  
Rensselaer, NY 12144

In order to provide assistance to you in developing the updates, OCFS will be presenting two satellite broadcasts with the National Resource Center for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUSKids, and SUNY Professional Development Program. The first broadcast will be on **June 8, 2010, from 1:30 to 3:30**. It will address the elements of a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan that is MEPA compliant and strategies and tools that may be useful in implementing your plan. The second satellite broadcast will be aired in July and will focus on MEPA requirements and targeted community recruitment efforts based on the race and ethnicity of the children coming into care.

Additionally, the CFSR final report noted from interviews with state stakeholders that there may be some confusion around state regulations related to the licensing of foster and adoptive homes, and the consistency by which the regulations are being implemented statewide. To address this issue, OCFS will be conducting an assessment of training needs with the Homefinders.

Regional Office staff are available should you need assistance with your Recruitment and Retention Plans. Completed plans are due to your Regional Office by **December 31, 2010**.

Sincerely,

Laura M. Velez  
Deputy Commissioner  
Office of Child Welfare & Community Services



An Equal Opportunity Employer

cc: Sheila Poole  
Linda C. Brown  
Renee R. Hallock  
Regional Office Directors  
Anne Leone

## Developing an Agency Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruitment & Retention Plan

NYS regulations require that agencies have a comprehensive recruitment strategy/plan for establishing a pool of waiting foster and adoptive parents that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in foster care. This document is meant to assist in the development of a foster/adoptive parent recruitment and retention plan that is compliant with the Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA).

MEPA states: A State, or any other entity in a State that is involved in adoption/foster care placement and receives title IV-E funds from the Federal government, may not:

- Deny any individual the opportunity to foster or adopt on the basis of the child’s or the prospective parent’s race, color, national origin (RCNO) or,
- Delay or deny a child’s placement into foster care or adoption on basis of the child’s or prospective parent’s RCNO.

**This template outlines the areas that need to be included in a comprehensive plan. You may choose to use this template, or update your existing plan. If you choose to update your existing plan, be sure to include all areas noted below.**

When completing your plan please keep in mind the big question: “Has the recruitment planning process been effective in developing a **“POOL”** of committed families that reflect the children and youth in need of placement, and have you been able to retain qualified families?”

### **I. GATHER THE FOLLOWING LDSS/AGENCY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:**

Total number of children in LDSS/agency’s care: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total number of children in residential/congregate care: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total number children in therapeutic foster care \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Ages of children in Foster Care</b>	<b>Total # in Foster Homes</b>	<b>Total # in Higher Level of Care</b>	<b>Total # of Freed Children with a Goal of Adoption</b>
<b># 0-2 years</b>			
<b># 3-5 years</b>			
<b># 6-9 years</b>			
<b># 10-13 years</b>			
<b># 14-17years</b>			
<b># 18 years and older</b>			

<b>Race/Ethnicity of Children in Care</b>	<b>Total # in Foster Homes</b>	<b>Total # in Higher Level Care</b>	<b>Total # Freed Children with a Goal of Adoption</b>
<b>African American/Black</b>			
<b>Caucasian/White</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Hispanic</b>			
<b>Native American</b>			
<b>Other</b>			

<b>Foster Home: Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of Available Foster Homes</b>
<b>African American/Black</b>	
<b>Caucasian/White</b>	
<b>Asian</b>	
<b>Hispanic</b>	
<b>Native American</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

**II. Please address the recruitment needs:**

Total number of homes needed: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Homes Needed For:</b>	<b>African American/ Black</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Caucasian/ White</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Infant/ Toddlers</b>						
<b>Teens</b>						
<b>Sibling groups</b>						
<b>JD/PINS</b>						
<b>Behavioral Needs</b>						
<b>Emotional Needs</b>						
<b>Respite</b>						
<b>Emergency</b>						

**Please use the following outline to complete your written recruitment and retention plan. The plan, which can cover up to three years, should be considered a living document that is reviewed and updated, as warranted, on a regular basis. The elements noted in this template need to be incorporated in your county or agency plan.**

**1. Determine the Need:**

- a. Review available data related to demographics of children needing recruited families (foster/adoptive parents).
- b. Determine unmet needs.
- c. Look at vacancy and utilization rates.

**2. Assess Current Situation:**

- a. Determine the opportunities and challenges of recruitment and retention-how can opportunities be capitalized, challenges be minimized? How can local efforts be linked with State efforts?
- b. Consider past recruitment successes and disappointments. What worked and didn't work? Why?
- c. Decide what you want to build on, what needs to be corrected and resources available and/or needed?
- d. Decide most critical issues to address in the local plan.

**3. Develop Measurable Objectives:**

- a. Consider both recruitment and retention objectives.
- b. Determine what families and communities need to be targeted for recruitment and retention.
- c. Consider what processes, policies or procedures need to be improved.
- d. Make sure objectives are related to priority needs.

**4. Develop Key Strategies:**

- a. Establish criteria for selecting a strategy.
- b. Keep uppermost in mind the families you will target in your recruitment and what it will take to retain them.
- c. Consider developing community partnerships, including business partnerships.
- d. Consider culturally competent strategies.
- e. Consider involvement of current families.

**5. Implement Plan:**

- a. Designate persons to carry out assigned tasks.
- b. Regularly review, monitor and adjust work plans.
- c. Engage other staff, community partners, resource parents, foster/adoptive parents and others in participating in recruitment and retention efforts.

**6. Evaluate Results:**

- a. Determine extent to which objectives were met and document results.
- b. Identify systemic changes, resource needs, training needs and other opportunities for full scale implementation and continuous improvement.
- c. Determine what factors provide for retention of the foster and adoptive parents you currently have, and what more may be needed in order to retain others.

## Process for Developing Local Recruitment & Retention Plans

Process Steps	Materials & Tools
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Establish local R&amp;R team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint a team of stakeholders to be responsible for developing and implementing the plan</li> <li>• Consider including foster care and adoption staff and foster and adoptive parents; licensing representatives; training staff or contractors; representatives from case management including direct service and supervisors; community partners, other?</li> <li>• Establish a mechanism for coordinating with other local efforts and gaining approval of leadership of process and plan</li> <li>• Orient team on State's overarching goals, PIP, Practice Model and the respective roles of the State and local entities related to local recruitment and retention efforts</li> <li>• Consider developing a vision statement for the local team's work</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit – visioning activities</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 1: Determine the Need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review available data related to demographics of children needing recruited families (foster and adoptive families) in your area</li> <li>• Review placement stability information and information about children being placed out of the area</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data related to the need</li> <li>• Determine unmet need(s)</li> <li>• Review data related to current foster and adoptive families</li> <li>• Look at vacancy and utilization data</li> <li>• Develop profiles of the children who most need families in your area</li> <li>• General brainstorming regarding the types of families that are currently successful with fostering and adopting children in care</li> </ul>	<p>State and local data reports</p> <p>Reference material for developing child profiles</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 2: Assess Current Situation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to analyze and identify factors that will affect your plan (ex: grants; ICWA compliance: shelter population; Court Orders, lack of community connections, etc.)</li> <li>• Determine the opportunities and threats – how can opportunities be capitalized, threats be minimized? How can local efforts be linked with State efforts?</li> <li>• Consider past recruitment successes and disappointments. What</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit – SWOT activity</p> <p><i>Optional</i> use tool: "Assessment of</p>

<p>worked and didn't work? Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using focus groups with foster/adoptive parents and staff to further assess the current situation</li> <li>• Compare your area's specific retention and response process against the "generic process" provided</li> <li>• Decide what you want to build on, what needs to be corrected and resources available and/or needed</li> <li>• Decide most critical issues to address in the local plan</li> </ul>	<p>Recruitment and Retention Programs" to determine strengths and weaknesses, in conjunction with SWOT Toolkit- "Is Your System Family Friendly?")</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 3: Develop Measurable Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider both recruitment and retention objectives</li> <li>• Remember who are the children in your care who need families</li> <li>• Remember what families and communities need to be targeted for recruitment and retention</li> <li>• Consider what processes, policies or procedures need to be improved</li> <li>• Finalize objectives; make sure objectives are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time bound</li> <li>• Identify objectives for the period of the plan</li> <li>• Make sure objectives are related to priority needs</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit: Establishing SMART objectives</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 4: Develop Key Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish criteria for selecting a strategy</li> <li>• Keep uppermost in mind the families you will target in your recruitment and what it will take to retain them</li> <li>• Consider developing profiles of families to be targeted</li> <li>• Generate potential strategies that will address the priority needs and appeal to targeted families</li> <li>• Consider both targeted recruitment and retention in developing strategies</li> <li>• Select strategies with highest potential impact based on where your organization is developmentally</li> <li>• Consider developing community partnerships, including business partnerships</li> <li>• Consider use of technology</li> <li>• Consider culturally competent strategies</li> <li>• Consider involvement of current families</li> <li>• Consider involvement of youth</li> <li>• Choose only 1 or 2 strategies at a time</li> <li>• Determine resources available to implement the plan</li> <li>• Determine support needed from local and State leadership</li> <li>• Gain approval and leadership support for the chosen strategies</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit: Developing Family Profiles</p> <p>Toolkit: Prioritization grid</p>



<p><b>Step 5: Develop work plans for each major strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop detailed work plans for 1 or 2 key strategies</li> <li>• Consider recruitment materials (recruitment brand and messages), training and other resources that will be needed to carry out strategy</li> <li>• Consider specific steps in how and where to locate and engage targeted families, including what messages to use, what community partnerships, including business partnerships might be appropriate to cultivate; how you will be responsive to and retain targeted families</li> <li>• Consider the steps necessary to be responsive to and retain targeted families</li> <li>• Adopt the work plan(s), assign responsibilities, timeframes and determine milestones</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit: Work Plan Tool &amp; Communication grid</p>
<p><b>Step 6: Implement plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve current foster and adoptive parents in your efforts</li> <li>• Designate persons to carry out assigned tasks</li> <li>• Regularly review, monitor and adjust workplans (TEAM)</li> <li>• Identify policy and procedure changes and training needs, including cultural awareness training</li> <li>• Continue to look for incremental improvements to refine the work plan</li> <li>• Look for other improvement opportunities</li> <li>• Engage other staff, community partners, resource parents and others in participating in recruitment and retention efforts</li> <li>• Continuously work to create a culture in the local agency that recruitment and retention are everybody's business</li> </ul>	<p>Toolkit: work plan comment section to track progress</p>
<p><b>Step 7: Evaluate results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine extent to which objectives were met and document results</li> <li>• Determine successful strategies and those that should not be repeated</li> <li>• Identify systemic changes, resource needs, training needs and other opportunities for full scale implementation and continuous improvements</li> <li>• Incorporate lessons learned in next year's plan; repeat process</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Step 8: Acknowledge contributions of participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the time to acknowledge the team: resource families, social workers, managers, volunteers ... all who contributed</li> <li>• Give specific feedback on what worked and what did not work</li> <li>• Establish a budget of both time and money to mark the successes</li> <li>• Ask upper level executives to participate and give specific feedback</li> <li>• Publicize results</li> </ul>	

## Definitions

**Goals** are a general statement of a desired future state.

- They are what the organization must achieve if they are to accomplish their mission and be true to their beliefs.
- They are formulated to address the organization's most critical issues
- They are usually long term such as 3 to 5 years.

Example of a goal: The agency will have sufficient resource parents who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in care and are able to provide placement stability while they and the agency work together to achieve permanence objectives for each child.

**Objectives** are the State's/organization's commitment to achieve specific and measurable end results.

- They tend to be short term, a year or less
- Objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound (SMART); they indicate how success will be measured

Example of an objective: By (specific date) the agency will have licensed and/or approved for placement (specific quantity) families who are proficient in speaking Spanish.

**Strategies** are statements of how the organization will accomplish its stated goals thereby achieving its mission.

- Strategies are the articulation of bold commitments to deploy the organization's resources toward the stated goals

Example of a strategy: The agency will develop a partnership with Latino Family Services to assist in recruiting and training Spanish speaking families.

**Work or Action Plans** are detailed descriptions of specific actions required to implement and achieve strategies. Strategies indicate who will be responsible for each task, timeframes and milestones.

Example of a specific action statement: The agency will review trend data to determine the number and possible location of Hispanic children coming into care during the past 3 years.

## Action Plan Definition

Action plans are detailed descriptions of specific actions required to implement and achieve strategies. Action plans contain step-by-step directions, timelines, responsibilities and major milestones (milestones at which in-process results are to be evaluated).

- An action plan should be tied to a strategy(s).
- Action plans can be prioritized based on the individual action items importance, urgency and do-ability.

### Example Action Plan State

**Strategy:** The State will develop and/or support initiatives that engage experienced foster and adoptive parents in supporting the recruitment of new families.

**Result intended:** Parents available at identified local sites to support recruited families from first inquiry to placement

#	Action	Resp.	Start Date	End Date	Milestone
1	Gather data from local sites (number of new parents required, extent of help needed, current involvement of parents... )	Joan	xx/xx/xx	xx/xx/xx	Data compiled and analyzed
2	Report made to administration, resources and budget identified	Joan	xx/xx/xx	xx/xx/xx	Initial budget established
3	Schedule meeting with foster parent association president to discuss the need and detail resource requirements.	Dave	xx/xx/xx	xx/xx/xx	Meeting scheduled
4	Prepare for meeting (develop preliminary list of requirements, agenda, list of required attendees... )	Joan & Dave	xx/xx/xx	xx/xx/xx	Preliminary proposal developed
5	Hold the meeting	Joan & Dave	xx/xx/xx	xx/xx/xx	Preliminary proposal reviewed, modified and agreed on

### Why this is important –

Action plans ensure that strategies/tactics are carried through to results. They allow specific assignments of tasks to individuals in the organization. They provide an effective system of accountability and the possibility of new discoveries.

### Suggested processes and tools –

Each strategy leader will prepare a preliminary action plan, using the tool provided in this section. He/she will then bring it to the meeting for consideration of the total group for input and approval. For some strategies an appropriate action may be process mapping to determine where a particular process can be improved.

After setting the strategies in motion, it is helpful to have quarterly progress meetings with the planning group to problem-solve barriers, monitor the progress and start new strategies, once the old ones are completed. This will help to keep the recruitment work plan a living document and will result in continuous program improvement.

**Action Plan Worksheet**

**Strategy:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Results Intended:** \_\_\_\_\_

#	Action	Resp.	Start Date	End Date	Milestone

